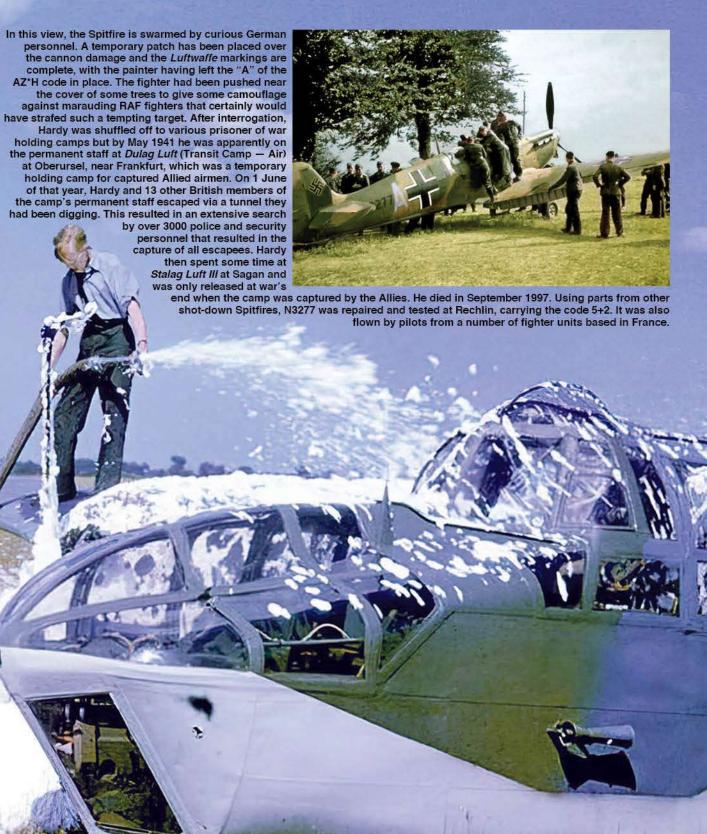
## COLORS OF WAR

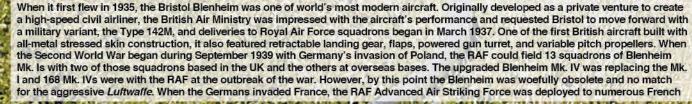
WELCOME TO OUR NEW DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTING COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT FROM THE LATE 1930s THROUGH THE EARLY 1960s. THESE IMAGES HAVE BEEN PULLED FROM OUR EXTENSIVE PHOTO LIBRARY AND WILL SERVE TO DOCUMENT HISTORIC AIRCRAFT AND THEIR FINISHES

## BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



With the invasion of France, aerial fighting intensified on both sides of the English Channel so it was no surprise that aircraft from opposing air forces started coming down in some numbers and were quickly snatched as war prizes. One such machine was Supermarine Spitfire Mk. IA N3277/AZ\*H that was flown on 15 August 1940 by Pilot Officer Richard Hardy who engaged with Bf 109Es over the Channel off Swanage. The Spitfire, assigned to 234 Squadron at Leconfield, took a direct 20mm cannon hit behind the cockpit, causing extensive damage and shattering the canopy. The stricken Spitfire was quickly surrounded by Bf 109Es and the German pilots pointed to the ground - wanting him to land in France. Rather than risking a parachute jump over the Channel, Hardy dropped gear and flaps and landed in a farm field near Cherbourg where he was almost immediately captured. This was during the height of the Battle of Britain and getting an intact Spitfire was a major propaganda coup so the plane was extensively photographed. This view shows the damage to advantage as a German cross is painted over the British roundel.





airfields for strikes on German targets. On 14 May 1940, a combined force of 71 Blenheims and Fairey Battles attacked advancing Germans and a stunning 40 aircraft were shot down by *flak* and Bf 109Es. From that point, even though Blenheim missions were protected by fighters the losses were high — averaging 25% and any Blenheim flight over occupied territory took on the aspect of a suicide mission. The enlisted crew of Blenheim Mk. IV Z7432/YH\*J assigned to No. 21 Squadron ventured forth from RAF Watton to attack German targets in France on 4 July 1941. The bomber was hit by accurate German ground fire but managed to limp back to Watton for a successful crash landing minus the propeller for its left Bristol Mercury radial. As can be seen, the base fire crew doused the plane with suppressant foam. The photo shows the Mk. IV to be in near-new condition and camouflage buffs will note that the top colors are soft-sprayed (the edges blending into each other) while the bottom color has a hard line of demarcation. After useful parts were removed, the airframe was scrapped.

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